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THE EVENING RAMBLE.

AN
EVENING RAMBLE:
OR,

DO N'T LOOK SO SOLEMN.

, By Father William.

New-York:

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SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, 200 MULBERRY-STREET.

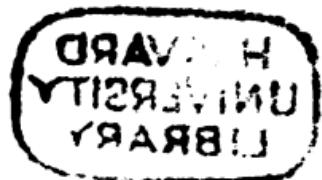
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AN EVENING RAMBLE:

OR,

DO N'T LOOK SO SOLEMN.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVENING WALK.

“FATHER,” said George, “I wish you would take a walk with us into the woods: they are beginning to be so beautiful!”

It was about the middle of May—the season of the first flowers and foliage. The weather was, indeed, rather cold and windy; but then the gayety

of surrounding nature made almost everybody forget the chilly air and dark clouds.

“ Will you go, father ?” said George, in greater earnest than before. There was a promise to this effect of several days’ standing ; and children, as we all know, seldom, if ever, forget promises.

The father was fatigued with a hard day’s work, but he could hardly refuse.

“ If you will wait a few minutes,” said he, “ I will go with you.”

“ That we will do,” said George, and the matter was at once arranged. “ But I wish to have Eliza go too,” continued George.

“ Well, where is she ?” said the father.

“Gone to Mr. Marble’s,” was the reply.

“Will she be here soon?”

“In about five minutes,” said her mother.

“She is coming now,” said George, as he looked through the window.

Eliza was soon on the spot, and almost as soon equipped for the ramble. It was near sunset, but the distance to the woods was not very great. The father, in the mean time, having dispatched his errands, the party set out.

They were to pass through several fields, and over a causeway that led through a swamp. The children were greatly elated. The vernal world was

all in motion ; and children, as you know, love a world that moves.

George began to talk about the turtles he once saw, basking in sunshine, among the ditches ; and Eliza gathered some of the flowers that were scattered in the richest profusion around her.

The father followed, but his mind was elsewhere. Not that he was naturally insensible to pleasure : society to him was inviting ; nature was all glowing with beauty ; his children were lovely : but he was fatigued, and his stern brow did not so much as relax. In truth, it was almost always so with him. He was willing his children should have amusement, but he was

never disposed to lead them in their sports, and seldom to accompany them.

“Now, father,” said Eliza, “do n’t look so solemn! Why do n’t you look cheerful and laugh?”

The father felt keenly the remark, but so abstracted were his thoughts, that it was not easy to change their current; and as for affecting what he did not feel, he despised it—a hypocrite he could not endure to be.

The repeated exclamation, “Do n’t look so solemn, father,” by one whom he loved so tenderly, at last won his heart, and, in some good measure, brought him forth into the sunshine of smiles and cheerfulness.

CHAPTER II.

THINGS SEEN.

EXTERNAL objects—to the children in particular—now became quite absorbing. There were not only flowers and rich verdure everywhere, but birds and insects almost innumerable.

“I have often heard partridges drumming in these woods,” said George.

“Very likely,” said his father; “and I think that before many days we shall hear the whippowil. These woods will furnish him with a nice retreat.”

“Why is it,” said Eliza, “that the whippowil shuns us, and seeks such

retired places for his song? If I could sing but half as well as he, I would sing where people could see and hear me, too."

"There is a chipmuck!" exclaimed George, as they approached a clump of trees. "Father, father!" he repeated, "there 's a chipmuck!"

"Where?" said the father.

"There!—running up that tree!"*

The squirrel was soon aloft, among the thick branches; but, instead of a chipmuck, as the children of that neighborhood were wont to call the striped squirrel, it was a large, gray squirrel.

Eliza, who had never before seen a

* See Frontispiece.

gray squirrel, was delighted. It made her think of a kitten, it was so large. It passed along to the extremities of one of the main limbs of the tree it had ascended, where our party had one more glance at it: thence it leaped upon the extremities of another tree, with boughs thicker than the first, and was no more seen.

The father was not a little disposed to moralize, and to declaim against that cruelty which has put the birds and squirrels in such constant fear of him who ought to be their protector and friend; but he was so much afraid of looking "solemn" again, that he bit his lips, and said nothing.

The musketoes had not yet arrived, or they might have been greatly annoyed by them. The forest was a famous resort of these little insects, during the great heats of summer.

Eliza began now to think of returning. She had made the tour of what, to her, was quite a world : but she was easily persuaded by her father to pursue the journey a little longer.

It was the season for the wild honeysuckle to make its appearance, with its beautiful blossoms, and sometimes its early but watery fruit, called the honeysuckle apple. They hoped to find it, on the borders of a swamp they were now approaching ; but they were, in this re-

spect, disappointed. The wild honeysuckle was a stranger to this region.

The shades of evening were at length rapidly approaching. Near them was a cemetery, newly laid out, but already beautiful. George would gladly have turned aside to visit it; but Eliza pleaded the lateness of the hour, and her father was quite ready to grant her request.

Several rare and curious birds, that had not gone to their rest, were seen, as they passed along homeward, among which was the woodpecker. It was rare and curious, I mean, to the children.

One of these birds was at his work,

boring the decaying trees for the worms which are the cause of this decay. He was so busy that he did not observe them at first. Thus they had a fine opportunity to witness his performances.

They passed, in returning, the very place where they had seen the gray squirrel; but he did not show himself. If he had not retired for the night, he was at least hid in some snug corner.

“O! what bird is that?” said one of the children. All looked, for a moment, with great attention, at the place which was pointed out. A large bird, on the limb of a tall tree, near the opening of the forest, was looking about, somewhat alarmed, and almost ready to

fly. It had a slight resemblance to the mourning-dove, but was more slender, and had a longer neck.

The children were almost clamorous to know what it was.

“It seems to me like the mourning-dove,” said their father. “O no,” he immediately rejoined, “it is a pigeon.”

George, who had read about pigeons, wished to know whether it was a carrier-pigeon, or a passenger-pigeon.

This led to conversation about the different kinds of pigeons; and, in the mean time, the stranger upon the tree suddenly darted away through the opening, and disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

MATTERS TO THINK ABOUT.

As the company made the best of their way home, they began to moralize: “This walk,” said Eliza, “though it promised but little at first, has really been quite pleasant; for we have seen, in the compass of a mile, in going and returning, many new and interesting objects.”

“But the country,” said her father, —“field, garden, roads, woods,—is *full* of interesting objects, both to adults and children, would we but have our eyes open. If we do not often meet, in the

same short walk, with the gray squirrel, the woodpecker, and the pigeon, we do with something else, unless the fault is all our own. He that runs may always read, in *nature's* book. The late President Dwight," he added, "of Yale College, in the thousand little excursions he made with his friends, and especially with his pupils, used to enjoin it on them to keep their eyes open. Not a bird or a squirrel—hardly a leaf—could stir without his notice."

I have not the skill of Dr. Franklin, in moralizing upon passing occurrences, but the present affords so good an opportunity for saying something, that I wish to avail myself of it. Will you

bear with me, youthful reader, just for once ?

Those parents who are not "too solemn," as Eliza would say, may make the commonest walks and simplest occurrences very profitable to their children—perhaps more so than their set lessons.

The mother of George and Eliza, on hearing the recital of their story, on their return from their ramble, took occasion to remind their father how much was lost, both to parents and children, especially the latter, by this sort of solemnity, this distance, this want of due sympathy with infancy and childhood.

But I wish to call the particular attention of the reader to the power which children possess over their parents—to make them happy or miserable.

Parents are always made happy by children when the latter give them the listening ear; whether in the walk, in the family, or at the set lesson. The kind and persevering attempts to get the “solemnity” from their father’s face, which succeeded so well with George and Eliza, would succeed equally well everywhere else.

How many, many parents there are in our land whose employments and habits are such, saying nothing of their education, that they look nearly as

solemn as Eliza's father did ; and who need the same influences to relax their stern visages into a smile !

Some of these are Christian parents. They would gladly lead their children, by example as well as by precept, to love the same God whom *they* love ; and yet their faces are so very forbidding—not to say gloomy—that, in spite of themselves, they exercise a repulsive rather than a winning force.

If there be anything in the wide world calculated to relax the brow made stern by study, hard labor, or vexation and trial, it is the Christian religion, with its hopes and promises. Shall we drive our children away from

Christianity by a solemn, woe-begone countenance, with which it has no natural affinity ?

But I must talk to children, rather than to adults. And will you not, my dear young friends, take courage from the example of George and Eliza,—and their success too,—and do as much good to your parents, should the circumstances require it, as they did to their father ?

They come from their hard labor,—whether of the mind or the body makes little difference,—with aching head and weary limbs, and you ask them to relax their brow, and put on a smile, and play with you : and you do right. But be

sure to make your requests respectfully and kindly. Do not offend them by roughness or impatience. Perhaps they will put you off, at the first, or even repulse you. On a second invitation to take a walk with you, they may consent to go, both for their benefit and for yours. And if you fail, why not tell them the story of the evening ramble of George and Eliza with their father ? It is a very simple story, but it has a good moral. Rightly told, and at the right time, it may do much good.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW TO MAKE EACH OTHER HAPPY.

I WISH children would consider well one object which the Sabbath school is designed, by the Author of our being, to accomplish. I have not the slightest doubt that it is intended, in part, to be an instrument of the conversion of many a parent who has never yet received a single good impression at church, although he may have been a church-goer all his lifetime.

It is not by exhorting parents to repentance that children who attend Sabbath schools are likely to do them

good. O no! It is by setting them, in various particulars, a good example. They are to be sober, but yet cheerful; serious, but not gloomy; conscientious, but not whimsical or notional. They are to show them, from day to day, and from hour to hour, that they have been learning of Jesus.

They have learned at the Sabbath school, I say, that it is our great business, in this world, to be like Jesus Christ. Let them, then, endeavor to put in practice what they have thus learned.

They have been taught that whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they must do all to the glory of

God. They, no doubt, believe it: let them show that they believe it by living as the injunction requires.

When the New Testament tells us explicitly, "Of such is the kingdom of God," it means something. Children, you can never enough consider how much you were honored by Christ, when he bade his adult and more learned apostles to become like you.

Will any of you doubt whether you can do as *much* good, in the families in which you live, as I have here supposed? Try it, then, and see. If, after suitable trial, you find it otherwise, it will then be time enough to discontinue your efforts.

But in order to have opportunity to do good to your parents, you must love and seek their society. Some children —strange to say it!—do not like the society of their parents, as long as they can obtain that of anybody else.

Now, I have not one word to say against your loving the society of others, especially of your playmates ; nay, the more you love them, if they are worthy of love, the better. But how intensely soever you love your playmates, there is a fault somewhere if you do not love the society of your parents still better.

Some parents, I know and have already admitted, do not care much about the society of their children, unless they

will be as grave—as “solemn”—as themselves. But this is a mistake, and fraught with great evils.

While, however, it is a great evil for parents to try to bring their children to look as grave, and move with as measured a step as themselves, it is a great blessing to have the young endeavoring to make their parents and friends look as cheerful, and seem as buoyant, as themselves.

CHAPTER V.

GREEN OLD AGE.

A GREEN old age is what almost every one admires, though there are few, as I confess, who enjoy it: but I know of some who do not look "solemn," or unduly grave, but cheerful and happy. Such persons would not need urging when an opportunity for a summer evening's ramble presented. Their faces would brighten and shorten—not lengthen—at the invitation; and they would *lead* in the excursion, rather than be drawn, so to say, at its chariot wheels.

I will give you the story of one of these green old people, whom I have long known; and I would give you her name, but that she might not like to have it seen in print. She is very modest and unassuming.

She is about ninety-five years of age. Possessed of great wealth, she might live in a palace, and have it all to herself—no one to molest or disturb her. Some there are, in her circumstances, who would do so. Not so with her, however. Though she loves her home,—attached to it as she is by the ties of half a century,—and though it is one of the most delightful mansions I ever visited, she prefers the faces of her

children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to all its lonely delights.

The last time I saw her was on her birthday. She was just ninety-three years old. No rooms were better furnished, no fire burned brighter than did hers. It was the opening of winter, yet she was to set out the very next day for a distant city, to spend the winter with her daughter.

When avaricious and hard-hearted children, after having been brought up tenderly, turn off their aged parents with some old cabin, or the mere wreck of a house, while they themselves occupy the mansion, it is not strange if the latter should be willing to leave it for a

better. But when, as now, they leave the mansion for a cabin voluntarily, the case is altered.

I have had several conversations with this excellent old lady within the last ten years. In one of these I sought to know her views in regard to existing modes and fashions,—especially those of eating and dress,—so strangely altered since she came upon the stage of active life. I found she did not place the golden age wholly in the past, but that she understood as well as I the intrinsic merits both of past and present times.

If there were more happy mothers and fathers,—with faces less solemn,—

I am quite sure there would be more happy children. If there was more of green old age, there would be more, in early life, of true—not factitious or affected—manhood.

Children, be encouraged! It may be in your power to prepare, for those you so dearly love, that green old age to which I have alluded. You may, in this respect, if in no other, be the means of hiding a multitude of sins; whereas, an evil course of conduct may bring them sadly and sorrowfully to their graves.

But suppose it should be too late to make much alteration in your parents: one thing remains,—it is for

you so to live as to secure for yourselves this precious boon. You expect—hope, at least—to live to be old; see that you secure for yourselves a green old age.

CHAPTER VI.

CHEERFUL HABITS.

OUR Saviour did not live to be old, so that we cannot be quite certain what his old age would have been: but we can imagine. Straws are said to tell which way the wind blows; and there are many little things in the Saviour's conduct which may help us in forming an opinion on this point.

One thing, at least, may assist us,—to which, however, I have before directed your attention. You know how fond he was of little children while he *did* live; and it is not likely he would

be *less* attached to them as he grew older.

You may, I think,—for this and various other reasons,—set it down as a fact that the Saviour, had he lived, would have possessed a green old age; and that none of the children who “played by the Jordan” would have had occasion to say to him, “Do n’t look so solemn!”

I have one more thought for you to ponder on. Dr. Dwight, of whom I have before spoken, in his works on theology, expresses it as his belief that the condition of those who go from this earth to heaven, will be that of unfading and eternal youth.

Can this be so? The thought of heaven is one of the most solemn thoughts that can enter the heart of man; and yet it need not make us look solemn, according to Dr. Dwight. No, not by any means. But if the saints in light do not look solemn,—if *they* are buoyant with eternal youth,—surely *we* may imitate them. All should remember that there is a great difference between cheerful pleasantness and foolish trifling.

Let children unite with parents,—and, if necessary, go before parents,—in this great work of getting off that somber, solemn cast of countenance which, to the young of both sexes, and at

every age, is so repulsive, and which may prove an indirect means of shutting out many—both children and parents—from the kingdom of heaven. Cheerfulness, as opposed to a somber appearance, should be our early study: it should be a work of education, both in the school and the family. I will say even more than this; it should not be despaired of, even in later life.

As the feelings affect the countenance so as to give it that solemnity of which I have been speaking, so the solemn countenance reacts upon the feelings, and makes them still more unpleasant. We should remember this, even if we are threescore and ten.

A friend of mine—just gone to his final account—told me that in going to his school, one day, he found his countenance out of shape—“solemn,” as Eliza would say: so he endeavored to force it into a proper form, and retain it thus. On his arrival at the school-room,—it was a walk of half a mile,—he found a change both in his feelings and appearance.

But children do not love to have us moralize too long. Short stories, and, by the same rule, short homilies, suit them best. If I live, you shall hear from me again, very shortly.

THE END.

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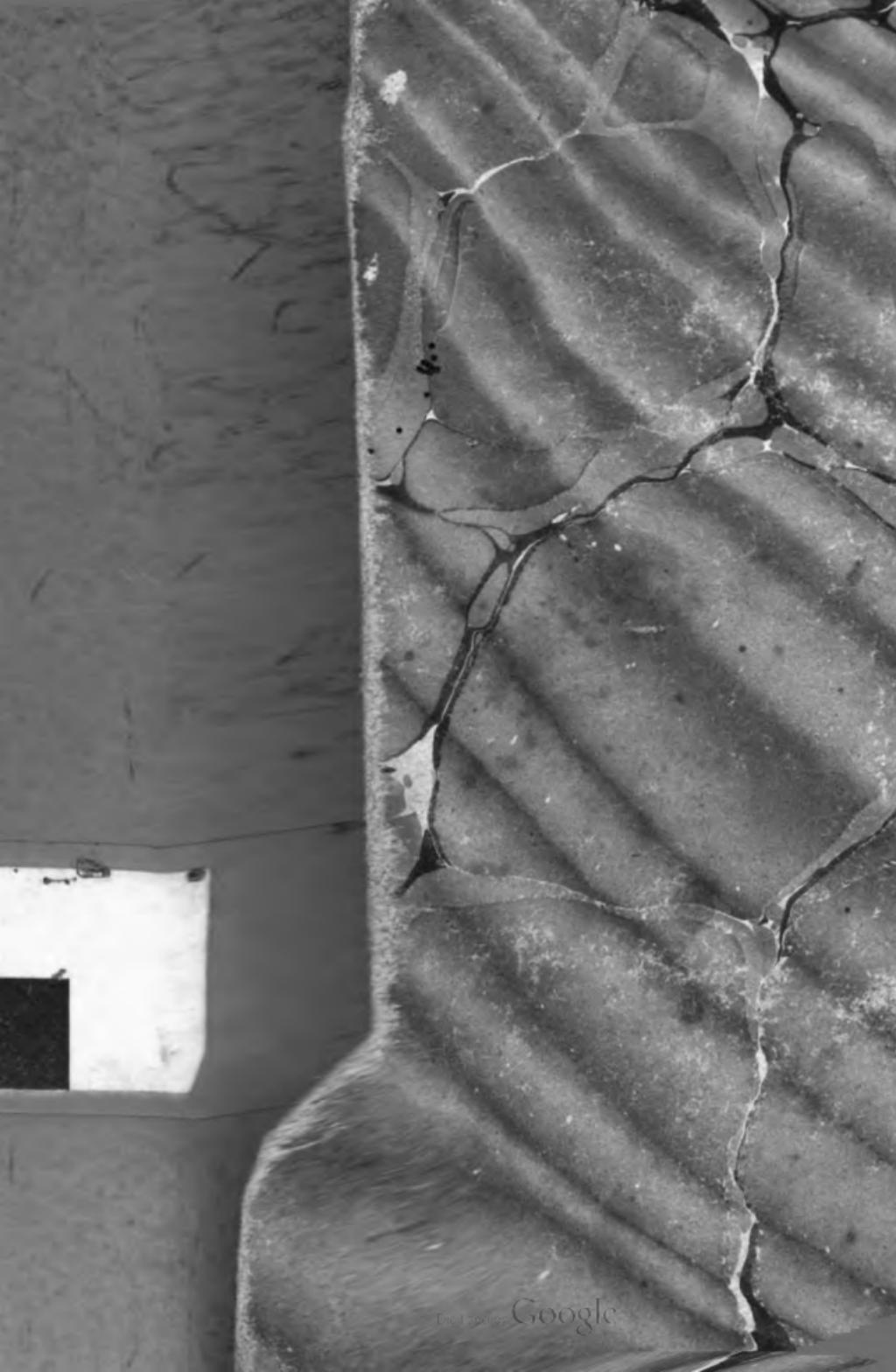
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Dr. Kitto is too well, and too favorably known as a writer, to need any commendation. It would be superfluous to say that the work is interesting, or replete with information.—*Northern Christian Advocate*.



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